

ANCHORED

Entry No. 71 in Our Prize Story Competition

BY C. J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE



They Eagerly Levered the Anchor and Its Burden Across to the Steamer's Side.

THE anchor was one of the old bay-palm type and much corroded. It was so big as to suggest that the battered little tramp steamer had not come by it as part of her original outfit, but had acquired it subsequently by purchase or—shall we say?—salvage. "Lie down along that anchor's stock!" said Captain Ortiz.

The knives of the dozen other men were held ready for upward jabs, and their faces were vicious and savage. But Lord George Drew did not look at them. He said "Certainly, if you order it," flicked the loose rust stock with his handkerchief, and stretched his long back on the uneasy bed. He smiled pleasantly at the spectators. People who did not know him had called Lord George brainless; but no one had ever denied the pleasantness of his smile.

The steamer was even worse equipped than most of her class, and, in spite of many bawled out orders for "small line" and "ratlin' stuff," none was forthcoming. As a consequence an old cargo sling was found, and with the yarns of this, when it was unlaid, Lord George's arms were seized to the flukes of the anchor, and his feet made fast to each side of the rusty stock. In fact, he was most efficiently crucified, and the pains of the lashings made him wince.

Then with handspikes they levered the anchor and its burden across the grimy forecastle head till the stock overhung the steamer's side, and they ranged rusty links of cable on the deck so that these would pay freely through the hawsehole when the anchor was let go.

"Now then, Mr. de Riou," said Captain Ortiz, "you quite understand the situation. You're six inches short of overboard. If your men from the shore try to retake this steamboat, overboard you and that anchor go."

"That's quite clear."

"So you will now proceed to give me an order for those cases of rifles and the ammunition you've landed."

"Couldn't be done," said Lord George cheerfully.

"And in return for this trifling favor," Ortiz continued, "which as a sane man I'm sure you'll see you can't refuse, I guarantee to give you safe passage across the Nicaragua frontier and—let me see—well, I'll make it a thousand dollars for traveling expenses to your next stop."

"A whole thousand dollars!" exclaimed the prisoner. "You dazzle me. I didn't know there was so much

money in all Nicaragua. But, unfortunately, my dear fellow, I must again remind you that there's such a thing as honor even among gunrunners."

The rank and file of the captors had followed the argument with open impatience. They were, from the faces of them, men with a fine appetite for cruelty; and not to send the heavy anchor plunging, now that the Gringo who had given so much trouble was crucified on it, was a piece of self denial that was quite beyond them. They lifted the handspikes, and began to prize it still farther toward the brink.

But Ortiz was a fellow of more foresight. Once he had been an officer and a gentleman in the Mexican army under Diaz, till an unsympathetic court martial had rendered a civilized climate unhealthy for him. The way he argued out the position was simple. The tall, careless Englishman had evidently screwed up his courage to die there and then if need be. But would his courage remain keyed up to the same pitch indefinitely? He thought it likely that the patient would be far more likely to listen to reason in half a dozen hours' time. And, anyway, however fantastic his exit might be, once the man was killed there would be nothing further to be got out of him.

So Captain Ortiz said "Stay!" and when his truculent following openly murmured he put a hand to his pistol slip and criticism filtered away. They saved face with more hard language and a few kicks of Lord George's unfortunate ribs, and then went below for cigarettes, mescal, and siesta.

ON the forecastle head the victim grilled alone under the tropical sun. There was not a breath of wind, not a film of shade, and, leaving out of the question all foreboding of what was to come, Lord George Drew lay at that time in very active torment. He had the strongest possible objection to being murdered; but the alternative of giving Captain Ortiz the information he asked for had been dismissed in a moment as beyond consideration.

Lord George was acting for Herman Schlesinger of New York. He had given a plain verbal promise to Schlesinger that the cases of rifles and the boxes of ammunition should be delivered to ex-President Laredo of Nicaragua, or his accredited representative, so far as his personal ingenuity could accomplish that end, and therefore as a gentleman he had no possible option of doing anything else. If the steamer had been wrecked, or the freight lost in landing, Lord George would have had no qualms whatever in reporting a total or a partial

loss; but to hand over the goods to someone for whom they were not intended, either for a bribe, or through fear of his own skin, was—well, it was one of the things one couldn't do, and there was an end of it.

And so the grilling afternoon went through, and the tropical night came suddenly, and with it the gleam of the moon and the occasional snapping of fireflies.

THE coming of Doña Carmencita was a triumph of the unexpected. As Lord George said afterward, he would have been less surprised if he had seen somebody tying knots in the equator.

The mental picture he had preserved of her was that of a rather languid Southern beauty, with olive complexion, and great black eyes, and blue-black hair, and crisp, billowy white muslin. But here, coming up over the bows of the steamer, was a boy, a boy with rather chubby figure, and a good deal shorter than the high heeled, high coiffured Carmencita of a certain hot tropical night when the moon played hide and seek among the shadows of a certain someone's piazza pillars. But of course, for all that, he knew her on the instant.

She had climbed up, it seemed, by the port anchor chain, and her hand was yellow with rust as it reached up and grasped at a stanchion. She did not clamber over to the forecastle deck; but stayed perched on a link of the chain below, so that her head was on a level with the prisoner.

"Carmencita!"

"So you recognize me? I did not expect it. They say these boy's clothes alter one. And, anyway, I thought you would have forgotten me, Don Juan."

It is to be noted that sometimes Lord George was "John," when he was away from England, practising as an adventurer, and occasionally he was "William." Similarly, that surname took that earlier form of Drew which was spelt de Riou. And if in consequence people took him for a Canadian, that was their lookout.

"My dear girl," said the captive, "you should remember that your glances burn in more than skin deep. Any man who had seen you once would remember you to the end of his life, in whatever style you were rigged out. But, all the same, although I'll admit you make a very fetching boy, for myself I prefer the frills and the rebocino."

She indicated herself with a rusty finger. "Do you think I do not detest this? Yet I did it for you!"

He shrugged slightly in his bonds. "Then I've told you my preference in clothes. And also I should prefer to think of you as being safely back among decent

people in the city. They're a very rough, unpleasant crew out here."

"By the way they have treated you, Amigo," she retorted dryly, "I can believe that last. And so, as you do not seem able to take care of yourself alone, I think you should thank me for coming to help."

"What's that? Do you mean to say, my dear, that you came here to the end of the world to give me a hand?"

"Did you think I came to admire the scenery?"

"I didn't think at all: I was too surprised at seeing you." He looked her in the eyes. "I flattered myself on being cool enough at most times; but never when I'm near you. You're a most demoralizing young person."

She brushed aside the suggestion as if it displeased her. "We'll drop that, please. I have been asked—by a friend—to come here and meet you." She got out the sentences jerkily, and with some difficulty. "If I'd known you were in such a mess, I should have come earlier; but, as it is, my men are perfectly competent to get you clear of the scrape. I've a score of men and a big launch—quite enough. They're just up that creek behind the bluff where those nut palms grow. I dropped down here with the tide in a canoe."

"Then, my dear Carmencita, hurry up with your force, and get me clear. This antique anchor is so abominably rust pitted that I'm afraid my shoulder blades are dented for life."

"And you'll tell me where you've put those rifles, of course?"

Lord George's lips pursed up into a soundless whistle. "My dear girl, don't spoil the illusion!"

"The conditions are not my own; but—there are conditions." Her olive face had flushed to a delicate pink, and her slim, rust stained fingers played an impatient tattoo on the stanchion. He saw all this clearly in the moonlight. "Besides, you cannot help yourself, Don Juan. You must do as I ask, and then I shall save you."

"Perhaps," said the prisoner gravely, "you'd better let me have the whole proposal."

"You are to tell me where the rifles and the cartridge boxes are cached, and then I promise to rescue you at once."

"Of course, if you carry Laredo's authorization, I'll deliver them up at once."

"Do you think I carry a bundle of silly papers with me here?"

"I don't, for a minute."

"Then tell me where the rifles are."

"Tell me you've got the authorization first."

"I—I can't, Juan."

"I didn't suppose you could, my dear. There, now, get away back to your men. Mr. Ortiz and his friends on board here are rather a rough lot, and they may wake up any minute."

Her fingers grasped at his a little wildly. "But what about you? You must come too. They'll kill you if you stay."

"Oh, I'll admit there may be unpleasantness. And of course I should be delighted to spend the remainder of the evening with you, now, as always."

"Then tell."

"Charming young women shouldn't cry for the moon."

She clenched her fist. She could have beaten him for his stubbornness. "But I can't leave you like this. I came here on purpose to save you."

He laughed a little cruelly. "How badly you explain yourself, Carmencita. I thought from what you said that you were here after those blessed rifles."

"I should not have known you were here if it wasn't for the rifles. How was I to guess that you—you of all people—were a gunrunner?"

"Give it up."

"Oh, you laugh at me. You never can be serious. You said you could not marry me, because you had no money; so, when I saw a way of making a fortune, would you have me throw it away?"

"You had better not beat about the bush any more. Just tell me, please, whom you are working for."

"I cannot. They swore me not to tell."

"Very well, then, I guess—the anti-Laredo party."

"You may guess what you please. I must keep faith with my employers."

"And I'm sure you can't expect me to do less for mine. So there we are at a comfortable deadlock. In the meanwhile, Querida, I do wish you would—Tst! Bolt!"

Lord George's strained ear had heard Captain Ortiz and his friends waking up.

By gesture the girl made a last appeal to him hanging there in desperate danger; but he shook his head, and his debonair smile never faltered. She withdrew by the way she had come, her canoe dropping down stream into the cool dark, just as the first of the raiders stamped up the ladder to the forecastle head.

It was evident in a moment that a change had taken place in their counsels, and Ortiz gave voice to it without unnecessary talk. "You have had long enough to think the thing out," he announced. "Do you give up the rifles, or do you drown?"

"I don't give up the rifles. And, if you murder me, you don't get either them or the cartridges, anyway."

"We know all that. But night's come, and we've no further time to waste on you." Captain Ortiz gave an

order, and his men picked up the handspikes. The anchor stock already projected outboard, and the men levered it gratingly over the dirty deck.

The flukes lifted and balanced till Lord George was almost upright. "You won't get the rifles, you know," he commented placidly in farewell; "but I hope you'll think of me, Captain Ortiz, when your new employers shoot you for incompetence."

"Over with him!" Ortiz yelled, with a sudden spit of passion, and the men, keen enough for any piece of cruelty, tipped the handspikes. With a jarring slide the rusty anchor scraped over the edge of the plating, and sunk in a comet of flame, dragging the rusty cable links after it.

The last they saw of the crucified Lord George as they peered over the side was his hair standing on end, lit up by the phosphorescence of the water; and, forgetful of the rush of air in the descent, they congratulated themselves on having put fear into this cool Englishman at last.

Thereafter came the bustle of evacuation. The men had been lured on to this piratical foray with the promise of large reward if they were successful, and now all chance of gain was snatched from them, and they were smitten with a sudden clap of fear. So away they went into the night, under the thin moonshine, a muttering, sullen, unruly mob, rowing their boat with uneven, extravagant strokes, and finally vanishing up a creek that ran between the mangroves of the eastern bank.

Also in the black shadows of the shorewoods Doña Carmencita sat crouched in her canoe, and was shaken by dry sobs. She had failed, failed, failed, and a gallant gentleman had gone to his death for the sake of a point of honor.

In the meanwhile let us consider the situation of Lord George Drew. The lashings were made from yarns unlaid from an old cargo sling, and these had drawn. When lying on the boat, tied to the anchor, waiting for his damp end, in a sudden paroxysm of something that might be called delirium he had plunged and lunged, and—lo! one arm was free. Then it was an easy thing to slack up other knots, and the natural impulse of the

His first move was prosaic enough. He cleared a corner from the squalor the pirates had left in the cabin, spread himself a meal, ate heartily, and drank two long whiskies and sodas. Then he found the one deck chair that had not been gratuitously smashed, and in it smoked a luxurious pipe while he once more gave attention to the affairs of Herman Schlesinger of New York.

The situation was gloomy enough. He had come down to the Nicaragua coast with a remarkably scratch crew on the little tramp steamer. They had been for the most part shanghaied on board, and had been scared of the trade of gunrunning from the very start. Two had been killed by Ortiz's rifle fire from the shore after his first demand for the surrender of the cargo, and when subsequently he sent off his ultimatum that he would cut the throats of every mother's son on board if they waited another hour, they took his word for it and bolted, rowing out of the estuary mouth in the little tramp steamer's leaky lifeboat, as if silver cups depended on their speed.

The steamer then was rather a white elephant; for, even though she had reverted to his possession, he was unable to move her singlehanded. There was also the question of the rifle cases and ammunition boxes; though he had retained the secret of the hiding place of these, he could not regain possession of them without help.

Lord George lit another pipe as he summed these points, and blew contemplative tobacco smoke far out into the warm, tropical night. Presently he began to smile. A fanciful cloud that drifted up against the moon suggested the outlines of a woman, and that woman Carmencita. Now, why did Carmencita want those rifles? She came from a family that studiously stood aloof from volcanic Nicaragua politics, and indeed owed their poverty to the fact that they were impartially robbed by the existing President, and also by General Laredo, the chronic opposition. Somebody had obviously offered her a large sum of money if she could obtain possession: she had indeed admitted as much. Who could it be?

Lord George smoked three more pipes; but tobacco refused to give him inspiration. So, like a wise man, he gave up thinking, and went to bed, and slept till the sun sailed once more high above the dingy steamer.

He woke to the din of distant rifle fire. Volleys and scattered shots over a large section of the forest told of a brisk engagement. But it took more than a trifle like this to push Lord George from his accustomed routine. He had his usual morning tub in the steamer's seedy bathroom, shaved, dressed, and gave careful thought as to which of his small stock of neckties he should pick for the day's wear. Then he breakfasted, and finally emerged on deck cool, complacent, and well dressed, ready either to await events or to take a hand in them.

As it turned out, the scheme of action was arranged for him. A boat, furiously rowed, emerged from one of the creeks, bearing in her stern a flag one-third yellow, two-thirds white, with a crimson bar crossing the whole diagonally. The flag was the sign agreed upon that General Laredo's messenger was to bring when he came to take delivery of the cargo.

So that there should be no mistake about it, a man in the sternsheets of the boat stood up as they drew near the steamer and waved the flag violently. But Lord

George was not so cheered by the signal as he thought he would be. He was looking intently at a woman who sat also in the boat's sternsheets, who was no other than Doña Carmencita.

The boat raced up alongside, and the man in command clambered unhandily up the ruins of the ladder. He was splashed with the mud of much riding, and his spurs were red. He introduced himself as Colonel Quesada, and indicated with furious gesture the woman in the boat.

"We have caught her at last, the vixen!" he proclaimed. "She has confessed the harm she has done to you. Presently she shall be punished. In the meanwhile, Señor, I offer you my country's apologies."

"Thanks," said the Englishman dryly. "But Nature has made the señorita a breaker of hearts, and I am sure she does not merit punishment for what she cannot help."

The soldier stared. "But I have her word for it."

"The only injury the lady has done me is not to return my very obvious affection for her, and if you please we shall make this a groundwork for negotiations. I must have your word that she goes out of this affair without injury."

"Señor," said Colonel Quesada stiffly, "my country's lawlessness may be a scoff for nations; but it has never yet been said that we do not know how to defend the stranger within our gates from the attacks of our own people."

Lord George politely offered his cigarette case, and then, as the soldier hesitated, struck a light. It was impossible to refuse. And while Colonel Quesada inhaled the first lungful of smoke the other broke into fluent explanation. Doña Carmencita might err, probably had erred, being so intensely human and womanly, especially if the Señor Colonel said so; but it was impossible she should have erred maliciously against any of the powers that were, or that might be, or that ever could be, in Nicaragua. Her family ostentatiously kept their skirts clear of politics, and surely the Señor Colonel knew that that and nothing else was the cause of their obvious poverty. Still, Colonel Que-



"If You Ever Cared for Me,
Take Me Away Now!"

Continued on page 14



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he watched them walk away together, Bellew noticed upon the face of Cassilis an expression very like triumph, and in his general air a suggestion of proprietorship that jarred upon him most unpleasantly.

WHY do you frown so, Uncle Porges?" "I—er—was thinking, Nephew."

"Well, I'm thinking too," nodded Small Porges, his brows knitted portentously.

And thus they sat, Big and Little Porges, frowning in unison at space for quite awhile.

"Are you quite sure you never told my Aunty Anthea that you were going to marry her?" inquired Small Porges at last.

"Quite sure, Comrade—why?"

"Then how did she know you were going to marry her an' settle down?"

"Marry her an' settle down?"

"Yes, at the full o' the moon, you know."

"Why, really, I don't know, my Porges, unless she guessed it."

"I specks she did—she's awful clever at guessing things. But, do you know—"

"Well?"

"I'm thinking I don't just like the way she smiled at Mr. Cassilis. I never saw her look at him like that before,—as if she was awful glad to see him, you know,—so I don't think I'd wait till the full o' the moon, if I were you. I think you'd better marry her—this afternoon."

"That," said Bellew, clapping him on the shoulder, "is a very admirable idea. I'll mention it to her at the first available opportunity, my Porges."

But the opportunity did not come that day, nor the next, nor the next after that; for it seemed that with the approach of the hop picking Anthea had no thought or time for anything else.

Wherefore, Bellew smoked many pipes, and, as the days wore on, possessed his soul in patience, which is a most excellent precept to follow—in all things but love.

CHAPTER XX. Which Relates a Most Extraordinary Conversation

IN the days that now ensued, while Anthea was busied out of doors, and Miss Priscilla was busied indoors, and Small Porges was diligently occupied with his lessons, at such times Bellew would take his pipe and go to sit and smoke in company with the Cavalier in the great picture above the carved chimneypiece.

A right jovial companion at all times was this Cavalier; an optimist he, from the curling feather in his broad brimmed beaver hat to the spurs at his heels. Handsome, gay, and debonair was he, with lips upcurving to a smile beneath his mustachio, and a quizzical light in his gray eyes very like that in Bellew's own. Moreover, he wore the knowing, waggish air of one well versed in all the ways of the world and mankind in general, and, what is infinitely more, of the sex feminine in particular. Experienced was he, beyond all doubt, in their pretty tricks and foibles, since he had ever been a diligent student of feminine capriciousness when the Merry Monarch ruled the land.

Hence, it became customary for Bellew to sit with him, and smoke, and take counsel of this *preux chevalier* upon the unfortunate turn of affairs. Whereof ensued many remarkable conversations, of which the following was one:

BELLEW: "No, Sir, emphatically I do not agree with you! To be sure, you may have had more experience than I in such affairs; but then it was such a very long time ago."

THE CAVALIER, interrupting, or seeming to—

BELLEW: "Again, I beg to differ with you. Women are not the same today as they ever were. Judging by what I have read of the ladies of your day, and King Charles's court

at Whitehall, I should say not. At least, if they are, they act differently, and consequently must be—er—wooed differently. The methods employed in your day would be wholly inadequate and quite out of place in this."

THE CAVALIER, shaking his head and smirking—or seeming to—

BELLEW: "Well, I'm willing to bet you anything you like that if you were to step down out of your frame, change your velvets and laces for trousers and coat, leave off your great periuke, and wear a derby hat instead of that picturesque, floppy affair, and try your fortune with some twentieth century damsel, your high sounding gallantries and flattering phrases would fall singularly flat, and you would be promptly—turned down, Sir."

THE CAVALIER, tossing his lovelocks—or seeming to—

BELLEW: "The 'strong hand,' you say? Hm! History tells us that William the Conqueror wooed his lady with a club, or a battleax, or something of the sort, and she consequently liked him the better for it; which was all very natural and proper of course, in her case, seeing that hers was the day of battleaxes and things. But, then, as I said before, Sir, the times are sadly changed,—women may still admire strength of body, and even, occasionally, of mind; but the theory of 'Dog, woman, and walnut tree' is quite obsolete."

THE CAVALIER, frowning and shaking his head—or seeming to—

BELLEW: "Ha! you don't believe me? Well, that is because you are obsolete too; yes, Sir, as obsolete as your hat, or your boots, or your long rapier. Now, for instance, suppose I were to ask your advice in my own case? You know precisely how the matter stands at present between Miss Anthea and myself. You also know Miss Anthea personally, since you have seen her much and often, and have watched her grow from childhood into—er—glorious womanhood,—I repeat, Sir, glorious womanhood. Thus, you ought to know and understand her far better than I; for I do confess she is a constant source of bewilderment to me. Now, since you do know her so well, what course would you adopt, were you in my place?"

THE CAVALIER, smirking more knowingly than ever—or seeming to—

BELLEW: "Preposterous! Quite absurd! And just what I might have expected! Carry her off, indeed! No, no, we are not living in your bad, old, glorious days when a maid's no was generally taken to mean yes, or when a lover might swing his reluctant mistress up to his saddlebow and ride off with her, leaving the world far behind. Today it is all changed, sadly changed. Your age was a wild age, a violent age; but in some respects, perhaps, a rather glorious age. Your advice is singularly characteristic, and, of course, quite impossible, alas! Carry her off, indeed!"

Hereupon, Bellew sighed and, turning away, lighted his pipe, which had gone out, and buried himself in the newspaper.

To be continued next Sunday

A WOMAN'S ANSWER

THE barber who when shaving you or cutting your hair tries to sell you an innumerable lot of tonics and pomades you do not need hasn't anything over his sister, the talkative lady in the hair dressing emporium.

"And now, Madame, will you have anything on your head when I am finished?" asked the artiste as she concluded a vigorous shampoo.

"I am sure I don't know," was Madame's unsmiling reply. "I was in hope you would leave enough hair to pin my hat to."

ANCHORED

Continued from page 6

sada waved away any idea of interference.

De Riou went on. He would not dream of making a threat; but he couldn't avoid pointing out that he had refused to deliver up his cargo more than once already, and he felt it incumbent on his honor as a man to stipulate for an amnesty for Doña Carmenita before they proceeded further. And of course, over such an obvious point, the Señor Colonel must agree with him.

The Señor Colonel did nothing of the sort. He got angry, and then angrier, and then violently threw his cigarette into the estuary, where a shark surged up, turned over, and swallowed it with gusto. He had come for the rifles and ammunition; he was the duly accredited envoy of General Laredo; and what he had come for he would have—by force if necessary. The lady was entirely outside the present business, and in due

time would be dealt with as she deserved.

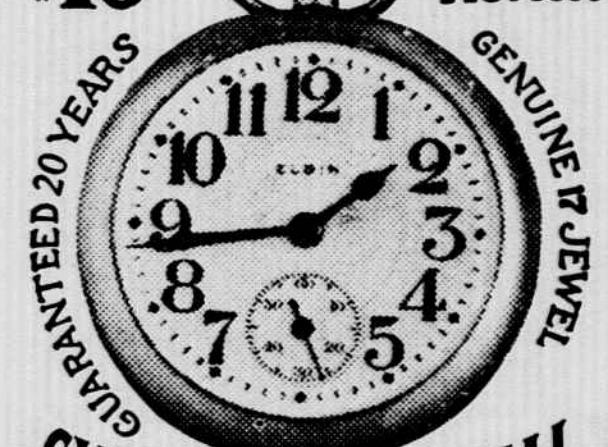
"If," said Lord George pleasantly, "you don't know how to behave to ladies here in Nicaragua, I shall be delighted to teach you."

AT this point the record is a trifle blurred. I think Colonel Quesada must have reached a hand to his pistol slip. Lord George Drew is no shot himself, and says he is always nervous at the sight of a revolver in the hands of another man. He says they are nasty, dangerous things. Anyway, the scene changed with suddenness. Colonel Quesada, with a set of iron fingers in the back of his military collar, was leaning over the steamer's grimy rail. The big muzzle of his own .44 revolver was jammed into the back of his head, and the languid English gentleman of his recent acquaintance was rapping out

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orders with a curtess and precision that spoke of previous military training.

Colonel Quesada was brave enough; but murder was such an ordinary occurrence in his own particular set that he quite credited Lord George's threat to blow his head off if he refused to carry out orders. So he shrugged his shoulders and did as he was told. There is always an afterward for vengeance.

So once more Doña Carmencita climbed up the steamer's side; but this time her progress was more slow.

"*Buenos días, Señorita,*" said Lord George. "I think, if you will, you had better go below till I finish my talk with Colonel Quesada, whose boat, as you see, is rowing away. And now, Colonel Quesada," he smilingly nodded to that official, "if you'll recall your boat, you may take delivery of the cargo here and now."

Colonel Quesada did so. "But, Señor, I do not understand how the guns are still on this steamer. Surely that guerrilla scoundrel, Ortiz, searched her?"

"Down to the last rivet. But I didn't say they were on the steamer. When my crew had levanted, and I saw the other fellows were making up their minds to board, I thought it wise to cache the cargo. At that time they were dancing about on that strip of beach to port there. Well, this little packet has an entry port just above the waterline on her starboard side, out of sight of where Captain Ortiz and his friends then were. I opened that, ranged the cases along the lower deck, and made fast the whole lot of them to a long warp. When they were all lashed on I launched the first overboard, and that pulled the rest like a string of brodbdingnagian beads. Finally I buoyed the end of the warp so that it would hang a fathom beneath the surface, and threw that over too."

"But didn't Ortiz look over the side?"

"He did. He asked me where I had stowed the stuff, and I told him, truthfully enough, overboard. He was foolish enough to disbelieve me."

"Señor, I still do not see—"

"Well, Colonel, perhaps I might have added that when the cargo was under water I put over the steamer's helm to starboard till the stream of the estuary canted her about two degrees out of her natural position; so that you see she was then—and for that matter is now—lying right over the top of the cases. I didn't mention this trifle to Captain Ortiz, and unless he had bored a hole through the steamer's bottom I don't see very well how he could have found out what lay immediately underneath it."

Colonel Quesada looked on the tall Englishman with dawning admiration. "Señor, you know well how to look after your own. I've heard it is a trait of your countrymen. I am not a sailor; but I suppose it is easy to move the steamer back till the boxes are once more in view?"

"Perfectly," said Lord George, and went on the bridge and ground over the wheel till the helm was amidships.

The vessel swung promptly in the current, and as they looked over her side there appeared out of the shadow the much struggled for cases lying in a heap on the mud of the estuary floor. To one end of the heavy warp on which they were lashed was a short piece of light line made fast to an oar, and the oar floated within six feet of the surface.

"Easiest thing in the world to weigh them," said Lord George, "now that you know where they are."

"Señor, I thank you," Colonel Quesada wrote in his pocketbook and tore out a leaf. "I have the honor to present you with a formal receipt in the name of my master, General Laredo. And now, if you please, I shall call my men and take possession of our property. My party has a desperate need for both the ammunition and the rifles. With them, even if we do not win, we can at least carry on the war."

Lord George thought that was one of the most unpleasant aspects of the business; but he had not time to follow up that point just then. Doña Carmencita—a most fascinating, bright eyed, and insistent Carmencita—drew him away.

"You have broken my heart; but you have done your duty. One last thing I ask from you. Take me away from here."

"Presently, Querida, presently. There is no such terrific hurry."

"Take me away, Juan. You have done all you have promised, and more. Take me away. I am afraid."

"But where to? We can't go vaguely out to the Pacific."

"Take me away!" she flung her arms round his neck and strained herself to him. "If ever you cared for me one little bit, take me away now!"

"If you make such a point of it," said Lord George awkwardly, "of course there's the gig riding to its painter astern, and we



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could drop down on the current in that and sail round to Puerto Angeles. But it will mean a two days' trip, and you will find it a roughish dose in an open boat."

"Juan, dear Juan, take me away!"

"Very well," said Lord George, "as you seem so keen on it," and went below for food and a couple of tins of water.

COLONEL QUESADA'S men were soldiers, and unhandy with ships' gear. They were making a long job of weighing the ammunition cases and the boxes of rifles. Also the day was hot, and already they were tired. The farewells between Colonel Quesada and the two in the gig were brief and dry.

Lord George shoved off, and when the boat had dropped clear of the steamer he stepped his mast, hoisted the lug, and took a half turn with the sheet round a thwart. Then he moved aft to steer.

But Doña Carmencita had the tiller under her arm, and asked if she might retain it. "Rest now, Señor, while you have the chance," said she. "You will want your strength for afterward."

She was stiff and formal in the way she addressed him, and for the moment Lord George frowned. But then he saw it was for the best. They are very punctilious about etiquette between the sexes in Central America, and open boat cruising with a girl to whom one is not married or at least engaged does not come within the scheme at all. So, as the wind was light and steady, and the lug sail small, he lay on his back on the bottom of the boat, smoking quietly, and admiring the hot cobalt of the sky overhead, and occasionally admiring Carmencita.

The whop-swish of a bullet ricochetting alongside woke him sharply. He sprang up, and the girl, with a small hand on his shoulder, desperately tried to thrust him down again. Another bullet pinged past overhead. She took two hands to him, using all her woman's strength to thrust him down under cover.

But a wrestle of that kind can have but

one ending, and a breathless Carmencita very promptly found herself neatly laid out on the boat's floor boards, while an unruffled Lord George sat in her place at the tiller.

"The treacherous sweeps," said he, "they're shooting at us! Luckily it's only revolvers they've got. I hope they don't get the rifles out of those cases, and try with them. With this light breeze we sha'n't drop down out of rifleshot for half an hour yet. By Gad, though! they have got one of the cases open!"

"And can't you see yet what I tried to save you from?"

Lord George looked puzzled.

"The excellent Don Herman Schlesinger of New York employed you to bring those guns and cartridges here?"

"Yes."

"And he employed me to get hold of them before you could deliver them to General Laredo. He had been paid, you know, before they left New York."

"I understood that. But why fail to make delivery?"

"Because there was neither a gun nor a cartridge in any of the boxes. What you brought down here to Nicaragua, and what Colonel Quesada is now tearing his hair over, is a cargo of useless iron ballast."

Lord George flushed a deep red. "And you? Where do you come into the deal?"

"I?" She laughed bitterly. "I was poor. I met a man once—it seems years ago—who said he was poor too and could not afford to marry a girl who was not rich. So when I saw a chance of getting riches I took that chance. Can you think of anything more foolish?"

Lord George continued to think as the boat dropped away down stream and the revolver bullets spitefully spat into the water astern. But at last he announced, "We are out of shot now."

Doña Carmencita sat up, stood up, tottered, and fell fainting into his arms.

Certainly at that moment Lord George Drew was the most embarrassed man in all Central America.

THE TRANSIT

Continued from page 7

dressed and eat what they ate. And the maid, with her face set to the fading sky like a star in the dim purple of evening, listened and thought that where love led the way it mattered little what life exacted. All the white poppies in the meadow bowed and swayed in the evening breeze, and said yes to her thought.

In the pauses of the day when her lover was not with her the brown maid still went down and talked to the river.

"Do you love the willows that lean over your edges and look down into you?" asked the maid.

"I feed them, and I help them to grow," said the stream.

"And the cows, the nice old cows that come down at sultry noon and stand knee deep in you, do you love them?"

"I cool them, and I give them rest and health."

"But the green, lush meadows that stretch all along your banks so tenderly, surely you love them?" said the maid.

"I keep them green," said the river.

"What, then," asked the maid, "what do you love as I love my lover?"

"Ah," said the river, "I love the clouds whose fleetings I mirror in my bosom, and the sea into whose arms I shall rush."

"That sounds a little far away," said the maid, and she got up to go home.

"It is only the distant and the unattainable that can be truly loved," said the river. "But excuse me now: I must hurry."

The maid laughed as she turned away.

THE summer passed and autumn came with its short days and cold nights, and the house inside was dull where the four of them sat together, the father dozing before the fire, and the aunt and the grandmother knitting by the lamp. Her lover came to her three times—and then he did not come. The maid wrapped a shawl over her head, and stood out by the clump of lilacs, and waited until she was tired of waiting, and watched the stars which were very far away. She remembered too how much farther apart they were than they seemed; and even the little jeweled group of the Pleiades that rose upon the eastern horizon so clearly pointed as to seem a golden brooch in the sky, she knew were but six lonely stars too far apart to be within hailing distance. The autumn evenings grew very chill, and night by night as she watched and her lover never came she understood more and more of the stars. They never made her shudder now, nor long to touch the four walls of her attic room.

One day the second eldest in the brown house, the little wrinkled aunt, who spoke least of all, lay down, and folded her hands, and shut her eyes, and turned her face to the wall, and after a few days she made her exit. And they carried her out, and laid her under the ground opposite the eldest one, making a mound there so that they should remember where she was. Then the brown maid and her father sat in the two chairs opposite the hearth in the evening, and now and then they spoke to each other.

WHEN a new spring came the brown maid went out over the woodland ways where the sap was rising in the twigs and the faint sunshine falling through them